

MUSC 402 Music and Sound for Intermedia

updated January 8, 2009

Meetings

Mon., Wed., Fri. 12:40–1:30 P.M. 402A ACAD
Final meeting Mon., May 11, 10:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M.

Instructor information

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Office hours: Mon. & Tue. 3:30–4:30 P.M.

Visitors will be met in the order of arrival during office hours. Visitors coming outside office hours may be asked to arrange another meeting time. You are welcome to schedule a meeting for a time outside office hours if necessary.

Introduction

Intermedia is the integration (not mere combination) of multiple modes of expression or experience, often in a such way that the lines are blurred between music, theater, visual arts, other skilled work, scholarship, etc. This course is a music- and sound-oriented approach to three basic types of intermedia art:

- Performance art: works involving live performers
- Installation art: works not involving live performers, and often without a specific beginning or ending
- New media art: works that involve new technology, such as the internet and games

Other sub-genres will be discussed, and you will be encouraged to find ways to merge your own skill set with the techniques from class and with the skill sets of others. By the end of the class, you will have a new awareness of your surroundings, life, and work, a record of publicly presented work, experience incorporating your skills in interdisciplinary collaborative projects, and a relationship with a group of other potential collaborators.

Students in this class may have varied backgrounds and areas of study but are interested in a deeper understanding of computer music in some way. Most students taking this course have completed MUSC 316, an introduction to computer music.

The prerequisite for this course is that you have some well-developed skill (suitable for publicly presentable work), whether artistic or not, and a willingness to explore the aesthetic qualities of your unique skill set and to find ways to integrate it with music or sound and with the unique skill sets of your classmates in collaborative intermedia projects.

Materials

Readings will be distributed electronically.

Goals

- **Analysis & Evaluation:** Demonstrate understanding of significant terms, concepts, events, works, and artists in intermedia art and technology in discussions of art work and readings presented in class.
- **Application & Synthesis:** Demonstrated understanding and application of course concepts and techniques in new artistic works that merge your unique skill set with course techniques and with the skills of your classmates.

Class Format

- Mondays: Demonstrations of techniques
- Wednesday: Lecture and demonstration of art works
- Friday: Collaboration meetings

This pattern will be adjusted as needed.

Topics

An official schedule of topics and readings will be distributed soon. Below is a list of subjects, artists, writings, and techniques that will be discussed in class.

Topics

- Synaesthesia and found sounds
- Performance art
- Structuralism and analysis
- Collaboration, authorship, and the posthuman
- Hacking and poststructuralism
- Instruments and Installations
- New media and net art
- Liveness and embodiment

Artists and works

- Laurie Anderson
- John Cage
- Philip Glass
- Pauline Oliveros
- Paolo Piscitelli
- Harry Partch
- Krzysztof Wodiczko

Authors

- Roland Barthes
- Walter Benjamin
- Kyle Gann
- Allan Kaprow
- Pauline Oliveros
- Luigi Russolo
- Richard Wagner

Techniques

- Basic recording
- Internet resources
- Basic video and animation
- Basic audio editing & processing
- Basic programming in Max/MSP/Jitter
- Circuit bending
- Building inexpensive microphones
- Second Life basics
- Machinima

Assessment

Your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Weekly reading responses	10%
Weekly progress reports	10%
Midterm group project	20%
Midterm partner project	20%
Final group project	20%
Final partner project	20%

Projects

You will present two projects with a partner and two group projects during the semester. These may be performance works, installations, new media works, or any other kind of intermedia expression you can conceive. Each must be presented publicly for credit, and one project must be presented before spring break. Some presentation opportunities are listed below, but you are welcome to make your own arrangements. Keep in mind that finding a venue is not an afterthought, and proposals and arrangements must be made in early stages of the project.

Each project be accompanied by a commentary on the concept, structure, and details of its realization. Each participant will additionally submit a brief essay discussing the role he or she played in the production of the work and how it relates to his or her own special knowledge or skills. You will be graded according to the quality, creativity, and integrality of your contribution to the product and the process as demonstrated by your regular participation, your essay, and the work itself.

Venues for presentation

Aural Tick (early March) Electroacoustic and intermedia works by TAMU students are presented every spring along with one or more special guest artists.

Vizagogo (end of spring) The TAMU Visualization Laboratory (Vizlab) presents its students' work in an evening show and week-long exhibition at the end of every spring semester. This class has been invited to prepare and present work for the program, including an interactive exhibit involving infrared proximity sensors and accelerometers (no theme has been chosen yet, but we had to purchase materials last semester). There is a small budget for our portion of the Vizagogo program, and you all are encouraged to begin thinking about ideas for this high-exposure opportunity.

Second Life This online virtual world (<http://www.ssecondlife.com>) allows for 3D mod-

eling, animation, and scripting, in addition to audio and video streaming. Since it attempts to come close to copying the ordinary world, it is also a possible venue for performances, but could also be used for machinima (movies made with virtual characters), virtual installations, or works that blur the boundaries between this virtual world and the ordinary world. Many things can be accomplished for free within this environment.

Immersive Visualization Center This special TAMU facility in the Halbouty Geosciences Building features a ground-level screen 8 feet tall and 25 feet wide, with 3D projection capability. The center hosts an annual competition for presentations that make use of the facility, which will be held next fall but will be announced in the spring. It is possible that you could work on a project using the space for presentation this semester, but could also use it in the fall competition.

Reading responses

Each week, you will contribute to discussions on assigned readings before the start of the Wednesday class meeting. You will need to demonstrate a sincere attempt to understand the material, address any assigned questions, raise some thoughtful questions of your own, and build upon or offer an alternative view to the post of a classmate.

Progress reports

Each week, you will submit a written concept for a potential intermedia project on WebCT before the start of the Monday class meeting. You will need to incorporate the topic and the tools or techniques presented during the previous week and propose a way to combine your project idea with that of a classmate or with known skills of classmates. This will be the fertile ground from which your course work will grow.

Policies

WebCT <http://elearning.tamu.edu> This course makes use of WebCT Vista for grades. If you have trouble accessing WebCT, use the help links on the WebCT website, or contact helpdesk@tamu.edu.

Attendance Your presence and attention is expected at all meetings. After three absences for any reason, your grade will be lowered by one letter grade for each unexcused or undocumented absence. Arriving to class after the attendance sheet has already circulated the room will be counted as an absence.

Creative work & growth Texas A&M is a research university. Our music technology courses focus on new means of musical expression with technology. *Be prepared for explorations outside your range of familiar art and music.* If your work remains within conventional, familiar, or comfortable confines, your explorations may be guided more explicitly in the form of supplemental assignments.

Materials and tools used All materials in your projects must be legal: either unique creations by you, public domain, or materials accompanied by express consent of their owner for use in your project. Use this as inspiration rather than a limitation. If you have a good idea that depends on reference to some already published work, look deeper to find what about that work is significant to your project. Can you achieve the reference with a unique parody? Can you find public domain materials that have a similar recognizability value, or establish familiarity through a back story or by creating a separate work to which your real project can refer?

Late work & revisions Late submissions will not be accepted for credit, but contributions to the class blog discussions are still encouraged.

Syllabus adjustments Any portion of this syllabus may be adjusted by the instructor if necessary. Any changes will be announced in class. Any concerns may be brought to the instructor at the time of the announcement, or in a private meeting within a week of the announcement.

Academic integrity “An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal or tolerate those who do.” Refer to the Honor Council Rules and Procedures at <http://www.tamu.edu/aggiehonor>.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room B-118 in the Cain Building, or call 845-1637.